



NEWS RELEASE

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Woman Sentenced For Pigeon Drop Scam

A 50-year-old woman was sentenced today to more than five years in local custody for duping senior citizens out of thousands of dollars in a pigeon drop scam, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

In an open plea to the court, Margaret Mary Souza of Quartz Hill pleaded no contest last month to two counts of grand theft from an elder and one count each of attempted grand theft and attempted theft from an elder.

An open plea is a plea that was not negotiated with prosecutors.

Co-defendant Teneca Wilson, 32, of Los Angeles was found guilty last month of one count each of grand theft from an elder, attempted grand theft and attempted theft from an elder. She was sentenced to six years and six months in prison.

Deputy District Attorney Tony Cho of the Elder Abuse Section prosecuted the case.

On two separate occasions, the defendants approached senior citizens and claimed they had found a large sum of cash. Known as a pigeon drop scam, the ruse involves asking victims to withdraw good faith money to show their commitment to sharing the funds.

On Jan. 6, 2012, Souza managed to steal \$7,000 from a 73-year-old woman. On Dec. 19, 2014, both defendants stole \$10,000 from an 89-year-old woman.

On Jan. 22, 2015, both defendants attempted to pull the same scam on an 84-year-old woman but a bank teller thought something was amiss and authorities were alerted. Both Souza and Wilson were arrested.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's and Los Angeles Police departments.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.